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CRITICISM OF THE HUNGARIAN BUILDING INDUSTRY

[Comment: From the following articles, the first of which was written by Lajos Szijarto, Minister of Construction, it appears that the Hungarian building industry suffered from overextension during 1951. Too many projects simultaneously undertaken created confusion and a manpower shortage that made it impossible to finish some major buildings on schedule.]

SHORTCOMINGS OF 1951 -- Budapest, Magyar Epitoipar, Vol I, No 2, 1952

During 1951 the Hungarian building industry was placed under the control of trusts and reorganized along Soviet lines. This made it possible to apply individual responsibility, strengthened the industry's organization, ensured wider scope for the initiative of enterprises, and defined the responsibilities of technical and administrative management personnel on lower echelons.

The introduction of work brigades created the fundamental working unit which must form the backbone of the building industry. It improved work discipline and made possible better organization and distribution of labor at the construction site. These advantages must be pressed by further development of the brigade system.

One of the most important achievements in 1951 was the establishment of permanent construction crews, complete with experienced technical foremen, brigades, and machinery, which could be moved from job to job without the delay usually incurred in assembling such an outfit.

Although there has been an increase in mechanization since 1950, the industry still fails to utilize machinery to the desired extent. Mechanization proceeds slowly because in many instances the reluctance of foremen, who are

- 1 -

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used to purely manual construction work, has to be overcome. The lack of cadres trained in the handling of machinery seriously handicaps the building industry and makes it difficult to provide the enterprises with mechanics and repairmen.

Prefabricated parts were more widely used in 1951. This practice must be encouraged not only for its expediency, but because the national shortage of lumber demands the gradual elimination of wood from the building industry.

Systematic planning and work organization are prerequisites in building. It would be an exaggeration to claim great advances in this field, because detailed plans are seldom prepared far enough in advance to be available as guides for work assignments and the purchasing of supplies.

The adoption of Soviet work techniques is lagging because the foremen dislike these methods, despite excellent results.

Construction work has lost its seasonal aspect; often more manpower is employed during the winter than the summer.

In 1951, new emphasis was placed on erecting beautiful buildings, which required special craftsmanship. In this way it became apparent that there was a lack of artisans capable of executing a decorative finish. To prevent this work from becoming a lost art, a special enterprise was created for the most skillful artisans where young workers can learn the art.

The gravest problem of the building industry during the past year was widespread laxity in work discipline. This laxity stemmed from the tolerant attitudes of supervisors who were afraid that strictness would further reduce the short ranks of labor. It manifested itself in frequent wage frauds, while the demands of enterprise managers for larger wage funds became so routine that it was necessary to forbid all wage fund increases which could not be proved essential. At the same time, eight or ten managers guilty of wage manipulation were discharged. Since then, payroll irregularities have decreased, superfluous manpower has been dismissed, and work is proceeding more smoothly.

Many problems arose concerning the handling of material. Material was improperly loaded and received only a superficial examination on its arrival. In 1952, provision must be made to have both the quantity and quality of incoming material carefully checked before it is accepted, and a single individual must be responsible for the job.

Finished work must also pass a more stringent examination in the future, because too often, to show that the norms have been exceeded, the foremen pass improperly completed work. Incomplete jobs appear on the records as finished work and are paid for accordingly. In one case the records indicated that 250,000 bricks were laid at a building site to which only 200,000 bricks had been delivered; another time, charges were made for  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times as much plastering as was required.

The industry suffered from the fact that too many construction projects were begun at the same time, making it nearly impossible to provide adequate personnel for all. Therefore, it was very wise to allow building only by special permit during the first quarter of 1952 and to concentrate on the completion of buildings in progress.

The major task in 1952 should be to reduce the high cost of building. Up to now it has been impossible to estimate the cost of a completed project, because bookkeeping has been disorganized. However, since the Soviet system of budgeting has been adopted and prices for both labor and material have been fixed, reduction in expenses should be easier.

- 2 -

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Accident prevention was another weak point during the 1951 season, but for the past few months safety regulations have been more strictly enforced.

If all the foregoing problems are solved, the building industry should be able to give a better account of itself in 1952. -- Lajos Szijarto, Minister of Construction

REPRIMAND BUILDING ENTERPRISE MANAGERS -- Budapest, Nepszava, 18 Jul 52

Because they failed to break down the work plan for a month in advance, five building enterprise managers were reprimanded by the trade union. The offending managers were Andras Kristof, Mihaly Tarcsai, Gyula Bako, Pal Zsori, and Gyula Mate.

They ignored the recent decision of joint conferences of trade-union and building enterprises calling for long-range work plan breakdowns on the basis of which supplies could be ordered, brigade work assigned, and work competition initiated.

REVEAL PLAN NONFULFILLMENT -- Budapest, Nepszava, 18 Jul 52

As stated by the Central Statistical Office in its report for the second quarter of 1952, the building industry still fails to concentrate sufficiently on completing major projects. Although various important buildings were erected during the first quarter of 1952, the Sztalinvaros foundry and locomotive repair shop, the three assembling sheds of the Kabelgyar (Cable Factory), and the Ajka mining school remained unfinished.

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- 3 -

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